# MA22 – K – Dean

## 4:00

#### The aff’s reliance on finding “objective” information through free journalism traps us in a fantasy that empowers the oppressors – we believe we are contributing to politics but in reality are just excusing our own lack of action by endlessly consuming “objective” information and re-entrench the system that pacifies us and enables capitalism – the only way to catalyze action is by focusing on advocacy, DEAN 01

[Jodi Dean. “Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics.” *Cultural Politics,* vol. 1, issue 1, 2005.] LHP JW DEAN 01,

[Jodi Dean. “Publicity and Deliberation: Democratic Ideals in Dispute: Pubilicity’s Secret.” *Political Theory,* vol. 29, no. 5, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Sage Publications, October 2001.] LHP JW

**Critical democratic theory and capitalist technoculture converge today around a single point-the necessity of publicity**. **Publicity is the organizing element of democratic politics and the golden ring of infotainment society**. Few on the Left are willing to theorize democracy without some notion of publicity. No matter how entangled politics becomes in networks of sentiment and spectacle, **many continue to think that rule by "the public" is enhanced by practices that enable the production and dissemination of public opinion**, practices generally implicated in technologies of surveillance and expectations of entertainment. So, **they emphasize public spheres and oppositional counterpublics as if these concepts referred to more than media productions**, interest groups, or rhetorical categories **invoked to mobilize a particular point of view. They underscore the public's right to know, positing, as it were, a secret the knowledge of which would solve the problems** **preventing the public from being all that it can be**. In short, **many critical democratic theorists assume the democratic potential of an ideal of publicity** even as they avoid explaining what, today, that potential might be.1 **Publicity is also the governing concept of the information age**. **Contemporary technoculture relies on the conviction that the solution to any problem is publicity. More information, greater** (faster, better, cheaper!) **access seems the only answer**. It doesn't even matter what the question is. **People are supposed to find out for themselves, to search r the truth, to form their own opinions-and the way to do that is through new communication technolo­ gies.** Conversely, **in matters as disparate as science, violence, economic success, and personal advancement, the key concern is with publicity, getting the finding before the public, alerting the public to a potential danger**, gaining mindshare, or establishing brand identity, again by taking advantage of net­ worked communications. These days, for example, **subcultural success is depicted less in terms of the risk of "selling out" than it is in the promise of "making it," that is, of gaining recognition** from the larger culture. **If some­ thing isn't public(ized), it doesn't seem to exist at all**. It would be stupid to claim that technologies, practices, and norms of pub­ licity never make valuable contributions to democratic politics. Suspicious inquiries into potential wrongdoing often uncover real crimes and produce significant reforms. That an event is spectacularized, we might say, doesn't mean that it won't have positive political effects. 2 It is nevertheless also clear that **the vast networks of news and entertainment that enable contemporary practices of democracy also threaten democratic forms of life**-especially as **they produce searching, suspicious subjects ever clicking for more information, ever drawn to uncover the secret and find out for themselves**. To call into question the obviousness of publicity as the norm of contem­ porary democracy, **to unsettle publicity's taken- for-grantedness** and af liate myself with theories and practices of democracy articulated through notions of antagonism and networks of desire, **I look at publicity's limit-the secret**. **My concern is not with the contents of secrets or the proper determination of what should be made public. Rather, it involves what this "making public" means with respect to the function of the secret within the logic of publicity**. I argue that **democratic politics has been formatted through a dynamic of con­ cealment and disclosure**, through **a primary opposition between what is hid­ den and what is revealed. The fantasy of a public to which democracy appeals** and the ideal of publicity at its normative core **require the secret as their dis­ avowed basis.**3 My inquiry doesn't amend its critique of the public with a reassuring alter­ native; such an alternative, it seems to me, can't precede critical engagement insofar as critique marks a certain impasse in thinking and seeks to bring this impasse to expression.4 Since to offer an alternative too quickly risks stopping critique before it starts**, it suggests a demand that protects some, generally dominant, forms of thinking even as it refrains om asking why, exactly, such thinking might need to be protected.** Thus, to bring to expression the impasse in an ideal of publicity that works simultaneously to encode democratic practice and market global technoculture, I focus on the limit point of democratic validity-the secret-and the sense in which publicity "requires" the secret. I consider three aspects of the requirement of secrecy. First, **publicity requires the secret as its constitutive limit, as that point of exclusion through which the public becomes intelligible**. Using Jeremy Bentham's Essay on Political Tactics, I show how **the public is structured through a split that is disavowed and held in place by the secret**. Second, **the public requires the secret historically**. During the Enlightenment, **publicity as a democratic ideal emerges in encounters with the sovereign privilege of secrecy**. I read J irgen Habermas and Reinhart Koselleck for their accounts of Freemasonry as a practical realization of this ideal. Finally, the public requires the secret in a sense that I understand as ideological, as part of the dynamic of a mediatized technoculture glutted in screens and celebrity, scandal and indignation. Here, **the secret sustains the fantasy that disparate audiences are a collectivity capa­ ble of being represented as a unitary actor or political site**. **Such a fantasy, I argue, damages possibilities for democracy as it becomes materialized in technocultural practices of spectacle and suspicion**. To say more about this third sense in which the public requires the secret: my claim is that **the ideal of a public sphere functions as the ideological sup­ port for global technoculture. The key element among the presuppositions pervading how we imagine and practice democracy, publicity is the organiz­ ing concep**t ("quilting point") **of the ideology that informs the desire to make the links and discover the secrets.**5 **By ideology, I mean the "generative matrix that regulates the relationship between visible and the non-visible, between imaginable and non-imaginable, as well as changes in this relation­ ship.**''6 **What is seen and imagined, practiced and understood, as democracy today operates through and as the materialization of publicity.** Many political theorists no longer regard ideology-critique as a viable analytical tool. For example, critics of the Frankfurt school have argued that the basic notion of ideology rests on an untenably naive view of people as vic­ tims of false consciousness. Too simply put, the (early) Frankfurt school pre­ sumes that the fundamental problem of social domination is that people don't know what they're doing. Its corresponding view of ideology-critique pro­ ceeds by unmasking mistakes to disclose the underlying truth. As critics of the Frankfurt school have rightly pointed out, this account of ideology comes up against all sorts of problems-epistemological questions of the nonideological, material issues regarding distinctions between ideas and apparatuses, and persisting practical concerns with respect to how cts and truths (knowledge) are produced (and deployed) in the service of prevailing power relations.'

#### Only a partisan press solves – a shift towards apolitical, “objective,” and non-historic press has led to the rise of Fascism and also harms anticapitalist movements – it was the reason Hitler gained power,

Fitzgerald, Andrew A. Letting the Fascists Speak for Themselves: The Enabling of Authoritarians and the Need for a Partisan Press. Stanford University, 11 July 2028, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0196859918786938. // LHP AB

The Generalanzeiger, the **urban mass circulation press oriented toward the Weimar political and cultural elite, was a response to a demand for popular reading material such as news and entertainment. Hale (2015) describes it as “politically colorless,” adding “these papers sought to please everyone and offend no one” (p. 3). He further notes that as Hitler’s movement gained power, most of these publications expected things to remain roughly the same, maintaining “their basically non-partisan standing during 1932— Germany’s year of decisions”** (p. 5). Modris Eksteins (1975) describes Generalanzeiger journalists as liberals “in a venerable rationalist sense; they were journalists in the spirit of the French philosophes [believing] in truth . . . and human understanding [which] led to mastery” (p. 306). Mosse (1977) adds, “the impressive circulation figures together with the quality readership of their elitist organs led to a widespread overestimation of the political influence of their publishers”—**a tragic result, claims Fulda, of the fragmented media landscape of the Weimar Republic. Fulda (2009) argues that “the fragmentation of the press into competing and often mutually hostile communication networks was a key feature of Weimar political culture**” (p. 9). Describing the local press, Fulda writes, “even in selfprofessed ‘unpolitical’ newspapers catering to local audiences, ideological news coverage was the norm.” This often meant supporting a particular candidate or parties, which Fulda disregards as ineffectual, with the exception of media spheres wherein no “alternative sources of information” (p. 12) existed. While Fulda concurs that **the majority of regional newspapers would normally try to avoid overtly partisan positions to appeal to as large and politically heterogeneous a readership as possible . . . provincial papers like the Generalanzeiger press more generally, were often conceived as “unpolitical**” . . . [in] a crass oversimplification. (p. 109) This **“nonpartisan press,” at least at the local level, should therefore be seen not as nonpolitical, but “as backing an implicit rejection of party-based parliamentary politics tout court.” This entailed “promoting a new kind of protestant, nationalist, and anti-socialist Sammlungspolitik, an explicitly nonparty political alliance that was based on the concept of heroic leadership,” an orientation activated first in the election of Hindenburg and then Hitler. Fulda** **sees the practices of the Weimar press as critical to the decline of the Weimar Republic.** According to Fulda (2009), “economic crisis as such” was an insufficient mobilizer of votes for the Nazi NSDAP. Rather, “**press presentation of increasing Communist violence and the perceived threat of civil war, together with the media image of an indecisive government, turned the Nazis into an attractive choice for voters desperate for decisive action” and “led to a political climate favorable to all anti-system parties”** (p. 12). The **pretense of a nonpartisan press masked its role in politics and the perpetuation of stereotypes that served to “reinforce pre-existing notions of antagonism between the metropolis (and political and cultural elites) and the provinces”** (p. 118). This resonates with Hale’s (2015) diagnosis that “**the press mirrored the mood and condition of the country**—confusion, uncertainty, and fear, and the clash of irreconcilable parties and ideologies” (p. 13). J. Herbert Altschull (1975), concurring with much of the above, also argues that the **major liberal Weimar newspapers failed by not actively opposing the totalitarian Nazi movement**. Instead, **the liberal press chose to defer to commercially and politically expedient traditional coverage**, thus **opening the space for the separate Nazi press to supersede and then eliminate the democratic press**. German newspapers in the late 19th century “**sought to be actively apolitical and to acquire large circulations and extensive advertising**” (p. 232). And **in the desperate state of post-WWI Germany, exacerbated by a string of political assassinations and the sanctioning of left-wing party presses, this apolitical pretense became more pronounced under a public climate that then turned antipolitical as “the public chafed ‘under the rule of unwanted politicians’”** (p. 233). Critically, Altschull (1975) argues, The liberal **press concerned itself** more and more in the mid-Weimar period with non-political questions, and **when** **it did [inevitably] enter the political arena, its weapons were the rapier of irony and the well-turned phrase, devices of limited utility in competition with the violent diatribes of the Nazi press and the terror in the streets.** (p. 233) Despite eschewing the “third rail” of political journalism, two potential yet divergent hypotheses suggest why the public impact of such coverage was ineffective. One, which Altschull (1975) notes but qualifies as potentially erroneous, is that the **public did not take the liberal press seriously**. The other is that they did in fact take it seriously but that “**they did not view it as a viable alternative to the radical forces, since it had not shown the will to battle those forces**” (p. 235), a position shared by Fulda. Either way, the speed with which the **liberal Weimar press dug its own grave** (along with millions of others) through weakkneed “wait and see” moderatism or outright sympathy for the nascent fascist politico-cultural apparatus is telling.

#### Capitalism is a death cult – the apocalypse is already happening. Without an unshakable commitment to the total and complete rejection of the fetishization capitalist value, we will all die like the dinosaurs. Only a unified movement can solve, Allinson 21

Allinson, J. (2021). *The tragedy of the worker: towards the proletarocene*. Verso Books. pg 8-17

Capitalism, like certain bacteria, like the death-drive, is immortal. It has its limits and crises but, perversely, seems to *thrive* on these. Unlike the multi- species life-systems powering it, **the only *terminal* limit to capital’s perpetual augmentation is**, if driven towards from within, external: **either revolution or human extinction**; communism, or the common ruin of the contending classes. Long ago, both Max Weber and Walter Benjamin saw an occulted religious foundation in capitalist civilisation. As Michael Löwy points out, Benjamin, by defining capitalism as a cultic religion, went much farther than Weber in identifying a Puritan/Capitalist guilt-driven imperative to accumulate. ‘The duration of the cult’, for Benjamin, ‘is permanent’. There are ‘no days which are not holidays’, and ‘nothing has meaning that is not immediately related to the cult’. In what sense is capitalism a cult? What are its rituals, its fetishes? Those of investment, speculating, buying and selling. It has no dogma other than those ‘real abstractions’, as Alfred Sohn-Rethel put it, entailed by its rituals. In Sohn-Rethel’s words, the act of commodityexchange is the key exemplar of a social action governed by an abstraction of which the participants have no consciousness. The buyer may be concerned only with the sensuous particularities of the commodity, the needs it fills, but behaves, structurally, in the moment of exchange as though what matters is the quantity of exchange-value embedded in it. Ritual action determines dogma; social being, that is, determines consciousness. Capitalist theology, however, instates not dogma but unyielding imperatives governing action. ‘Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets!’, Marx sarcastically withered in *Capital.* **Accumulation is, for capital, an imperative, not an option**. To exist as a unit of capital in conditions of universal competition is to accumulate or die. As long, therefore, as there is labour-power to exploit and, in Jason W Moore’s term, ‘cheap nature’ to appropriate, capital will augment itself. This very bifurcation of life into the exploitable and the appropriable, which Moore identifies as the foundation of a ‘Cartesian dualism’ unsustainably counterposing ‘Nature’ to ‘Society’, is not dogma but programme. It is related to a distinctive move of capitalist theology, currently given right- Evangelical sanction by Calvin Beisner and the Cornwall Declaration, to disavow in practice the existence of inherent physical limits. It posits, in its action, the earth as limitless cornucopia over which humans have dominion, and from which limitless accumulation must be extracted. This disavowal, this ‘real abstraction’, is the social basis of capitalist *implicatory denial:* the seemingly evidence-proof conviction of capitalist states that capitalogenic climate change can be remedied by means, and according to systems, that guarantee its perpetuation. The capitalocentric purview is commonly, but mistakenly, identified with the anthropocentrism of ancient and medieval monotheisms. Here, however, it is clearly *not* the Anthropos that stands at the centre, as though appointed by God to steward the garden of earth. At the centre is the ritual: that unconditional imperative to accumulate. And insofar as this imperative drives ‘adorers’, as Benjamin put it, to the horizon of human extinction, **capitalism** can – **must** – **be described as a death** **cult**. **Fossil capital** **is** but **one modality of** **the death cult**, albeit a paragon. **The ‘externalities’ of capital – climate chaos, biosphere destruction, resource depletion, topsoil erosion, ocean acidification, mass extinction, the accumulation of chemical, heavy metal, biological and nuclear wastes – extend far beyond the specific catastrophe of a carbonised atmosphere.** Capitalism is a comprehensive system of work-energetics. The food industry, which powers waged labour, and is key to the shifting value of labour-power itself, is as central to the deterioration of the biosphere as is fossil-fuelled transit. Nonetheless, the continuing decision for fossil fuels as a solution to the energy demands of capitalist production, for all the growing denial of climate-change denial among the antivulgarian ruling class, for all their concerned mouth music, is an exemplary case of the capitalist imperative of competitive accumulation at work. As Andreas Malm has fiercely and beautifully argued, **capitalism did not settle for fossil fuels as a solution to energy scarcity. The common assumption that fossil energy is an *intrinsically* valuable energy resource worth competing over**, and fighting wars for **is**, as geographer Matthew Huber argues, **an example of fetishism. At the onset of steam power, water was abundant, and, even with its fixed costs, cheaper to use than coal.** The hydraulic mammoths powered by water wheels required far less human labour to convert to energy, and were more energy-efficient. **Even today, only a third of the energy in coal is actually converted in the industrial processes dedicated thereto: the only thing that is efficiently produced is carbon dioxide. On such basis, the striving for competitive advantage by capitalists seeking maximum market control ‘should’ have favoured renewable energy.** Capital, however, preferred the spatio-temporal profile of stocks due to the internal politics of competitive accumulation. **Water use necessitated communal administration, with its perilously collectivist implications**. Coal, and later oil, could be transported to urban centres, where workers were acculturated to the work-time of capitalist industry, and hoarded by individual enterprises. This allowed individual units of capital to compete more effectively with one another, secured the political authority of capital and incorporated workers into atomised systems of reproduction, from transport to heating.  **Thus, locked in by the short-termist imperatives of competitive accumulation, fossil capital assumed a politically privileged position within an emerging world capitalist ecology**. It monopolised the supply of energy for dead labour, albeit in a highly inefficient way. This is the tragedy of the worker. That, as avatar of a class in itself, she was put to work for the accumulation of capital, from capitalism’s youth, amid means of production not of her choosing, and with a telos of ecological catastrophe. **That thus, even should the proletariat become a class for itself, and even if it does so at a point of history where the full horror of the methods of fossil capitalism is becoming clear, it would – will – inherit productive forces inextricable from mass, trans-species death. This does not preclude systemic, planet-wide transformatio**n. Particularly given the inevitably uneven global growth of class consciousness and resistance, however, and the concomitant embattledness of any reformist, let alone revolutionary, power on the global stage, **it does ensure that it faces extraordinary barriers**. As will become clear**. As of 2015, estimates suggested that humanity produced a total of 15.5 trillion watts of energy each year, of which a considerable 29 per cent was not used**. At an average of 2,000 watts per person (rising to 10,000 watts in the core capitalist economies), the majority was used for industry, commerce and transit, with only 22 per cent for household consumption. Some 90 per cent of this output was powered by fossil fuels: oil, coal, gas. This monopoly, enabling superprofits as monopolies do, ensured that fossil capital would always realise profit margins far higher than the industrial average. It has, in Malm’s term, become worth a ‘planet of value’. Each fossil fuel plant represents decades of investment awaiting realisation.  **To avert planetary disaster is to inflict an earth-sized blow on capitalist industry. It is to choose between burning a planet of value, and burning the planet itself.** But the death cult is so strong, so pervasive, that, against all resistance, the choice has already been made. **Apocalypse has begun. The button has been pushed**. Humanity is already committed to irreversible climate change. In May of 2020, levels of CO2 in the atmosphere hit 417 parts per million, the highest ever recorded – and the first breach of 400 ppm since the Pliocene. Climate activists are, in Richard Wilbur’s phrase, ‘mad-eyed from stating the obvious’. To understand the scale of what faces us, and the way it ramifies into every corner of our lives, is to marvel that we aren’t having emergency meetings in every city, town and village every week. **We are, increasingly, out of time. In** the capitalist *untimelich,* the time of the living and the time of the dead, human history and the history of inorganic sediments, collide. ‘Millions of years of concentrated solar energy’, as Huber calls it, have been released in an historical blink of an eye, only to rebound just as fast: the Deep Time equivalent of an asteroid strike. **The cyclical time of seasons turns freakish, leaving us uneasily sweating in the clammy mid-winter. Spring comes too early, hurricane-force winds and flash floods break the October calm, polar ice melts while temperate zones are plunged into polar winter. The Arctic burns, boreal forests turned to charred sticks. The Greenland ice sheet melts even in winter. Antarctic sea ice has suddenly and drastically contracted in recent** **years**. The polar vortex wanders, perturbed, and the mid-West freezes. In a parody of Revelations, Mediterranean storms rain fish on the island of Malta. **Stochastic weather events accumulate. Birds fall dead from the sky.** The progression of geological deep time, with its periods, eras and epochs speeds up so rapidly that it precipitates a crisis in the temporal order itself: spinning so fast, we may as well be standing still. The progressive time of human civilisation, reduced to the endless accumulation of stuff, collapses into nonsense. The cycle of ice ages, a necessary condition for human evolution, melts away for eternity. With awareness of which comes a wave of eco-anxiety, for which we grope for names – Glenn Albrecht’s ‘solastalgia’, Ashlee Cunsolo and Neville Ellis’s ‘ecological grief’, Renee Lertzmann’s ‘environmental melancholia’. Even at the end of 2018, 70 per cent of Americans describing themselves as ‘worried’ about climate change, and it has been a long two years for that fear to wax. **The sixth mass extinction, signalled by what one study calls ‘biological annihilation’, is underway**. **The oceans, which produce roughly half of the oxygen we breathe, are acidifying, and are swept by heatwaves, says a recent study, ‘like wildfire’. Coral reefs, home to a quarter of marine life, are bleaching. Insect biomass collapses, with 40 per cent of all species undergoing drastic decline**. **The bees, that once we believed were saved, are disappearing eight times faster than are mammals, birds or reptiles. Without their pollination work, 70 per cent of the crops that feed 90 per cent of the planet will fail**. **The question of human survival is inextricable from that of what sort of humans we should be. By 2070, MIT research says, the new norm for ‘many billions’ of people will be impossibly high temperatures that will kill less fit people and make outdoor work impossible. Half a billion will experience temperatures that would ‘kill even healthy people in the shade within six hours’**. **The Arctic, that ‘sluggish and congealed sea’ discovered by Pytheas, a breathing ‘mixture like sea-lung’, will be gone, on conservative estimates by 2040.** In 2019, the usually snow-bowed woodlands circling this uncanny sea-continent burned more fiercely than ever. Precise metrics of the scale of what will unfold are to be determined, not least by class struggle, but there is no longer, if there ever was, a choice between adaptation and mitigation. **So adapt. But to what?** Those species now going extinct were once well adapted. The widely accepted geo-logism, ‘Anthropocene’, is in one sense an obvious political evasion, diluting as it does the necessary focus on capital accumulation itself. Yet, of course, capitalism is something that the human species, and no other, does. And while there are unthinkably vast disparities in power and responsibility in the production of petro-modernity, the latter has had a proven – if, crucially, hardly irrevocable – popular base: the vatic rage of activists notwithstanding, no politician has been crucified for promising fuel tax cuts. This fact can easily be weaponised by the right. Of the recent protests of the gilets jaunes in France against declining wages and rising inequality and sparked by a rise in diesel tax later reversed by Macron faced by the scale of the protests, Trump tweeted that ‘[p]eople do not want to pay large sums of money ... in order to maybe protect the environment’. In fact, however, and allowing that the movement is hardly monolithic, the French uprising was characterised by a remarkable *refusal to refuse* to engage with questions of ecology, particularly compared, say, to the fuel- price protests in the UK in 2000 and 2005. Far from being characterised by ecological indifference, what characterised much of the French protest was disagreement between those for whom talk of ecology comes too soon, and those for whom such talk is inextricable from social – class – justice. One example of the former is visible in the claim of the prominent activist Jerôme Rodriguez that ‘[e]ventually, when we obtain the first things, ecology will have its place’; of the latter, the words of another, François Boulot, that ‘[t]he social and ecological emergencies are inseparable’, that ‘[w]e will not be able to operate the ecological transition without an equitable wealth redistribution’. Rodriguez’s rationale for his position, that ‘nowadays, people aren’t concentrated on this’, is not supported by the superlative gilets jaunes slogans, ‘End of the month, end of the world: same perpetrators, same fight’, and ‘More ice sheets, fewer bankers’. This refusal to compartmentalise is energising evidence of the new politicisation of the moment. Still, that not everyone opposed to the fuel tax rise has been so assiduous in drawing the connections is in part because the dispersed, privatised accommodation and individualised transportation of modern life offer individualised, immediate-term and distinctively capitalist answer to specifically human strivings. The concept of the Anthropocene is a tacit acknowledgment that the alienated labour of humanity has itself become a selective evolutionary pressure. It has already forced rapid adaptation in some species, where it has not resulted in extinction, as Bernard Kettlewell’s experiments with peppered moths show. The besooting of tree bark in industrial areas became a powerful selective force, favouring darker moths, harder for birds to see and pick off**. Now such pressures are coming for us, as powerful as the asteroid strike behind the Cretaceous-Paleogene mass extinction. We are compelled to adapt to ourselves.** From this point of view, there is no difference between adaptation and mitigation. **To close the fossil fuel plants, to destroy a planet of value, or even, dare we hope, the value-form itself:** are these not adaptations**?** Of course, this is not what is generally meant by adaptation. Implicit is a Green Zone-style survivalism of the rich; explicitly touted are permanent adaptations of capitalism to the consequences of capitalism. The ideology of ‘adaptation’ has become the ideology of capitalism’s triumph over all life.

#### The role of the ballot is to vote for the debater who best engages in the politics of the comrade – one that is oriented toward a shared communist horizon. Anything else means capitalism will co-opt movements. “Objectivity” is really a way for the press to halt the movement – Dean 19:

Dean, Jodi. Comrade: An essay on political belonging. Verso, 2019. // LHP BT + LHP PS

The term ***comrade* indexes a political relation, a set of expectations for action toward a common goal**. **It highlights the sameness of those on the same side—no matter their differences, comrades stand together**. As Obama’s joke implies, when you share a politics, you don’t generally distance yourself from your comrades. **Comradeship binds action**, **and in** this binding, **this solidarity, it** collectivizes and **directs action in light of a shared vision for the future**. **For communists, this is the egalitarian future of a society emancipated from the determinations of private property and capitalism and reorganized according to the free association, common benefit, and collective decisions of the producers.** But the term comrade predates its use by communists and socialists. In romance languages, comrade first appears in the sixteenth century to designate one who shares a room with another. Juan A. Herrero Brasas cites a Spanish historical-linguistic dictionary’s definition of the term: “*Camarada* is someone who is so close to another man that he eats and sleeps in the same house with him.”[2](about:blank) In French, the term was originally feminine, *camarade*, and referred to a barracks or room shared by soldiers.[3](about:blank) Etymologically, comrade derives from *camera*, the Latin word for room, chamber, and vault. The technical connotation of *vault* indexes a generic function, the structure that produces a particular space and holds it open.[4](about:blank) A chamber or room is a repeatable structure that takes its form by producing an inside separate from an outside and providing a supported cover for those underneath it. Sharing a room, sharing a space, generates a closeness, an intensity of feeling and expectation of solidarity that differentiates those on one side from those on the other. Comradeship is a political relation of supported cover. Interested in comrade as a mode of address, carrier of expectations, and figure of belonging in the communist and socialist traditions, I emphasize **the comrade as a generic figure for the political relation between those on the same side of a political struggle. Comrades are those who  tie themselves together instrumentally, for a common purpose: *If we want to win—and we have to win—we must act together*.** As Angela Davis describes her decision to join the Communist Party:I wanted an anchor, a base, a mooring. I needed comrades with whom I could share a common ideology. I was tired of ephemeral ad-hoc groups that fell apart when faced with the slightest difficulty; tired of men who measured their sexual height by women’s intellectual genuflection. It wasn’t that I was fearless, but I knew that to win, we had to fight and the fight that would win was the one collectively waged by the masses of our people and working people in general. I knew that this fight had to be led by a group, a party with more permanence in its membership and structure and substance in its ideology.[5](about:blank) **Comrades are those you can count on. You share enough of a common ideology,** enough of a commitment to common principles and goals, **to do more than one-off actions. Together you can fight the long fight. As comrades, our actions are voluntary, but they are not always of our own choosing**. **Comrades have to be able to count on each other even when we don’t like each other and even when we disagree. We do what needs to be done because we owe it to our comrades.** In *The Romance of American Communism*, Vivian Gornick reports the words of a former member of the Communist Party USA, or CPUSA, who hated the daily grind of selling papers and canvassing expected of party cadre, but nevertheless, according to her, “I did it. I did it because if I didn’t do it, I couldn’t face my comrades the next day. And we all did it for the same reason: we were accountable to each other.”[6](about:blank) Put in psychoanalytic terms, the comrade functions as an ego ideal: the point from which party members assess themselves as doing important, meaningful work.[7](about:blank)Being accountable to another entails seeing your actions through their eyes. Are you letting them down or are you doing work that they respect and admire?In *Crowds and Party*, I present the good comrade as an ideal ego, that is to say, as how party members imagine themselves.[8](about:blank) They may imagine themselves as thrilling orators, brilliant polemicists, skilled organizers, or courageous militants. In contrast with my discussion there, in the current book, I draw out how **the comrade** **also functions as an ego ideal, the perspective that party members—and often fellow travelers—take toward themselves**. This perspective is the effect of belonging on the same side as it works back on those who have committed themselves to common struggle. The comrade is a symbolic as well as an imaginary figure and it is the symbolic dimension of ego ideal I focus on here. My thinking about the comrade as a generic figure for those on the same side flows out of my work on communism as the horizon of left politics and my work on the party as the political form necessary for this politics.[9](about:blank) **To see our political horizon as communist is to highlight the emancipatory egalitarian struggle of the proletarianized against capitalist exploitation—that is, against the determination of life by market forces; by value; by the division of labor (on the basis of sex and race); by imperialism (theorized by Lenin in terms of the dominance of monopoly and finance capital); and by neocolonialism (theorized by Nkrumah as the last stage of imperialism).** **Today we see this horizon in struggles such as those led by women of color against police violence, white supremacy, and the murder and incarceration of black, brown, and working-class people. We see it in the infrastructure battles around pipelines, climate justice, and barely habitable cities with undrinkable water and contaminated soil. We see it in the array of social reproduction struggles against debt, foreclosure, and privatization, and for free, quality public housing, childcare, education, transportation, healthcare, and other basic services. We see it in the ongoing fight of LGBTQ people against harassment, discrimination, and oppression.** It is readily apparent today that **the communist horizon is the horizon of political struggle** not for the nation but **for the world**; it is an international horizon. This is evident in the antagonism between the rights of immigrants and refugees and intensified nationalisms; in the necessity of a global response to planetary warming; and in anti-imperialist, decolonization, and peace movements. In these examples, **communism is a force of negativity, the negation of the global capitalist present.** **Communism is also the name for the positive alternative to capitalism’s permanent and expanding exploitation, crisis, and immiseration, the name of a system of production based on meeting social needs**—*from each according to ability to each according to need*, to paraphrase Marx’s famous slogan—in a way that is collectively determined and carried out by the producers. This positive dimension of communism attends to social relations, to how people treat each other, animals, things, and the world around them**. Building communism entails more than resistance and riot. It requires the emancipated egalitarian organization of collective life.** With respect to the party, intellectuals on the contemporary left tend to extract the party from the aspirations and accomplishments it enabled. Communist philosophers who disagree on a slew of theoretical questions, such as Antonio Negri and Alain Badiou, converge on the organizational question—no party! **The party has been rejected as authoritarian**, as outmoded, as ill-fitting a society of networks. **Every other mode of political association may be revised, renewed, rethought, or reimagined except for the party of communists**. **This rejection of the party** as a form for left politics is a mistake. It **ignores the effects of association on those engaged in common struggle.** **It fails to learn from the everyday experiences of generations of activists**, organizers, and revolutionaries. **It relies on a narrow, fantasied notion of the party as a totalitarian machine.** It neglects the courage, enthusiasm, and achievements of millions of party members for over a century. **Rejection of the party form has been left dogmatism** for the last thirty years **and has gotten us nowhere**. Fortunately, the movements of the squares in Greece and Spain, as well as lessons from the successes and limits of the Occupy movement, have pushed against this left dogmatism. They have reenergized interest in the party as a political form that can scale; a form that is flexible, adaptive, and expansive enough to endure beyond the joyous and disruptive moments of crowds in the streets. A theory of the comrade contributes to this renewal by drawing out the ways that shared commitment to a common struggle generates new strengths and new capacities. Over and against the reduction of party relations to the relations between the leaders and the led, comrade attends to the effects of political belonging on those on the same side of a political struggle. **As we fight together for a world free of exploitation, oppression, and bigotry, we have to be able to trust and count on each other. Comrade names this relation. The comrade relation remakes the place from which one sees, what it is possible to see, and what possibilities can appear**. It enables the revaluation of work and time, what one does, and for whom one does it. Is one’s work done for the people or for the bosses? Is it voluntary or done because one has to work? Does one work for personal provisions or for a collective good? We should recall Marx’s lyrical description of communism in which work becomes “life’s prime want.” We get a glimpse of that in comradeship: **one *wants* to do political work**. **You don’t want to let down your comrades**; you see the value of your work through their eyes, your new collective eyes. **Work, determined not by markets but by shared commitments, becomes fulfilling**. French communist philosopher and militant Bernard Aspe discusses the problem of contemporary capitalism as a loss of “common time”; that is, the loss of an experience of time generated and enjoyed through our collective being-together.[10](about:blank) From holidays, to meals, to breaks, whatever common time we have is synchronized and enclosed in forms for capitalist appropriation. Communicative capitalism’s apps and trackers amplify this process such that the time of consumption can be measured in much the same way that Taylorism measured the time of production: How long did a viewer spend on a particular web page? Did a person watch a whole ad or click off of it after five seconds? In contrast, the common action that is the actuality of communist movement induces a collective change in capacities. Breaking from capitalism’s 24-7 injunctions to produce and consume for the bosses and owners, the discipline of common struggle expands possibilities for action and intensifies the sense of its necessity. The comrade is a figure for the relation through which this transformation of work and time occurs. **How do we imagine political work? Under conditions where political change seems completely out of reach, we might imagine political work as self-transformation**. At the very least, we can work on ourselves. In the intensely mediated networks of communicative capitalism, we might see our social media engagements as a kind of activism where Twitter and Facebook function as important sites of struggle. Perhaps we understand writing as important political work and hammer out opinion pieces, letters to the editors, and manifestoes. When we imagine political work, we often take electoral politics as our frame of reference, focusing on voting, lawn signs, bumper stickers, and campaign buttons. Or we think of activists as those who arrange phone banks, canvass door-to-door, and set up rallies. In yet another political imaginary, we might envision political work as study, whether done alone or with others. We might imagine political work as cultural production, the building of new communities, spaces, and ways of seeing. Our imaginary might have a militant, or even militarist, inflection: political work is carried out through marches, occupations, strikes, and blockades; through civil disobedience, direct action, and covert operations. Even with the recognition of the wide array of political activities, the ways people use them to respond to specific situations and capacities, and how they combine to enhance each other, we might still imagine radical political work as punching a Nazi in the face.Throughout these various actions and activities, how are the relations among those fighting on the same side imagined? How do the activists and organizers, militants and revolutionaries relate to one another? During the weeks and months when the Occupy movement was at its peak, relations with others were often infused with a joyous sense of being together, with an enthusiasm for the collective co-creation of new patterns of action and ways of living.[11](about:blank) But the feeling didn’t last. **The pressures of organizing diverse people and politics under conditions of police repression and real material need wore down even the most committed activists.** Since then, on social media and across the broader left, **relations among the politically engaged have again become tense and conflicted, often along lines of race and gender. Dispersed and disorganized, we’re uncertain of whom to trust and what to expect. We encounter contradictory injunctions to self-care and call out. Suspicion undermines support. Exhaustion displaces enthusiasm**. **Attention to comradeship, to the ways that shared expectations make political work not just possible but also gratifying, may help redirect our energies back to our common struggle.** As former CPUSA member David Ross explained to Gornick:I knew that I could never feel passionately about the new movements as I had about the old, I realized that the CP has provided me with a sense of comradeship I would never have again, and that without that comradeship I could *never* be political.[12](about:blank)For Ross, the Communist Party is what made Marxism. The party gave Marxism life, political purpose. This life-giving capacity came from comradeship. Ross continues: “The idea of politics as simply a diffused consciousness linked only to personal integrity was—*is*—anathema to me.” His description of politics as “a diffused consciousness linked only to personal integrity” fits today’s left milieus. Perhaps, then, his remedy—comradeship—will as well. Various people have told me their stories of feeling a rush of warmth when they were first welcomed into their party as a comrade. I’ve had this feeling myself. In his memoir *Incognegro: A Memoir of Exile and Apartheid*, the theorist Frank Wilderson, a former member of uMkhonto weSizwe, or MK, the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC), describes his first meeting with Chris Hani, the leader of the South African Communist Party and the chief of staff of MK. Wilderson writes, “I beamed like a schoolboy when he called me ‘comrade.’”[13](about:blank) Wilderson chides himself for what he calls a “childish need for recognition.”[14](about:blank) Perhaps because he still puts Hani on a pedestal, he feels exposed in his enjoyment of the egalitarian disruption of comradeship. Wilderson hasn’t yet internalized the idea that he and Hani are political equals. “Comrade” **holds out an equalizing promise, and when that promise is fulfilled, we confront our own continuing** yet **unwanted attachments to hierarchy, prestige, inadequacy. Accepting equality takes courage.** Wilderson’s joy in hearing Hani call him “comrade” contrasts sharply with another instance Wilderson recounts where comrade was the term of address**. In 1994, shortly before Wilderson was forced to leave South Africa, he encountered Nelson Mandela** at an event hosted by *Tribute*magazine. **After Mandela’s public remarks, Wilderson asked a question in which he addressed Mandela as “comrade.”** “Not Mr. Mandela. Not sir, like the fawning advertising mogul who asked the first question. **Comrade Mandela. It stitched him back into the militant garb he’d shed since the day he left prison.”**[15](about:blank) **Wilderson’s recollection shows how comrade’s equalizing insistence can be aggressive, an imposition of discipline. This is part of its power. Addressing another as “comrade” reminds them that something is expected of them. Discipline and joy are two sides of the same coin**, two aspects of comradeship as a mode of political belonging. As a form of address, figure of political relation, and carrier of expectations, comrade **disrupts capitalist society’s hierarchical identifications of sex, race, and class.** It **insists on** the **equalizing sameness of those on the same side of a political struggle** and **renders that** equalizing sameness **productive of new modes of work and belonging. In this respect, comrade is a carrier of utopian longings** in the sense theorized by Kathi Weeks. Weeks presents **the utopian form** as **carrying out two functions**: “One function is to alter our connection to the present, while the other is to shift our relationship to the future; one is productive of estrangement, the other of hope.”[16](about:blank) **The first function mobilizes the negativity of disidentification and disinvestment**. **Present relations** **become** strange, **less binding on our sense of possibility**. The second function **redirects “our attention and energies toward an open future** … providing a vision or glimmer of a better world.”[17](about:blank) **The power of comrade is in how it negates old relations and promises new ones—the promise itself ushers them in,** welcoming the new comrade into relations irreducible to their broader setting.

#### The alternative is to act even in the presence of unknowingness. We can either react to dominating structures by constantly deferring action in favor of gaining more information – gaining the secret – or we advocate for what is necessary even without complete knowledge about the outcomes. The aff’s discourse replicates capitalist logic where they perpetuate the belief that you should not act when you don’t know the absolute outcome, which functions as justifications for capitalism, Dean

[Jodi Dean. “A Politics of Avoidance: The Limits of Weak Ontology.” n.d. jdeanicite.typepad.com/i\_cite/files/butler\_and\_ontology.doc] LHP JW

**If unknowingness conditions ethics then it necessarily conditions politics as well. Our political choices, our exclusions, take place under traumatic conditions of unknowability and unpredictability.** **Our decision** for this **rather than that will necessarily involve a kind of violence, a foreclosure of the possibility of the future that would have resulted had we decided otherwise**. When we intervene politically, **we act within situations not of our own making, often in terms of representations and practices we might otherwise trouble or critique. Through our actions, we affect these representations and practices, changing them and ourselves in ways we cannot predict**. Zizek’s account of the Lacanian notion of the act emphasizes precisely this point: **in the act the distance between the ethical and political** (the acknowledgement of the limits of acknowledgement and the necessity of a decision) **collapses.** For Lacan, Zizek explains, **the act is strictly correlative to the suspension of the “big Other”—not only in the sense of the symbolic network that forms the “substance” of the subject’s existence, but also in the sense of an absent originator of the ethical Call, of the one who addresses us and to whom we are irreducibly indebted and/or responsible,** since (to put it in Levinasian terms) **our very existence is “responsive**”—**that is to say, we emerge as subjects in response to the Other’s Call**. Butler’s ethics is grounded in the way we are given over to the other, in the other as a foreign kernel of our own being. In a sense, **this other part of me is not fully foreign, fully other—he is part of me**. I imagine him as my equal in the scene of address, **we who may recognize each other and who are somehow each at the mercy of the other** (58). **We share a symbolic context. In contrast, the Lacanian act is self-grounding. The act suspends the symbolic network, rupturing the context of address and erasing the “I” that I am. Precisely here is the monstrosity of the act: the context that conditions me and within which I recognize the other is suspended. My relations are disturbed.** In the act, I am not myself. **The act is a catastrophe that happens to the me that I was and the relations in which I found myself. It transforms these relations, changing their terms, their contours, the very domain of the possible and permissible**. White would likely view this emphasis on the act as an instance of normative overload or an appeal to a messianic future. Yet this view would be mistaken for two reasons. First, **the act is not intentional in any proper sense; it just happens. An act confronts us, we find ourselves in the position of having no choice but to act and accept full responsibility for our act nevertheless**. So there is no normative overload here. Indeed, the opposite is the case insofar as there is no prior justification for an act: **acts just occur and when they do they change their very contexts of emergence, the contexts on which justification depends. Second, the notion of the act is not messianic because from the perspective of what comes before the act, the displacement and transformation it affects, the dissolution of my sense of who and where I am, is so catastrophic, that an act necessarily “involves the choice of the Worse.”** **It involves a kind of self-obliteration, the sacrifice of what is most dear, not as a result of calculation and planning, but in a free, incalculable move that one has no choice but to do. In politics, one does what one has to do, accepting responsibility, come what may.** Critical Theory Today The first generation of the Frankfurt School developed critical theory in an effort to confront and explain fascism. For them, immanent critique was crucial to this project as it enabled them to work from within what was given to grasp what came to be. At its best, **immanent critique was a practice of finding lost futures in enlightenment, loss possibilities for meaning and, perhaps, a freer, even reconciled, relation to the world**. White’s weak ontology turns immanent critique into immanent affirmation as it finds in critical approaches to the present sources that affirm it. The ambiguity that haunts his account of weak ontology contrasts mightily with the political and ethical positions that gave the Frankfurt theorists their ethical bearings. Could we, should we, imagine a political theory that confronted fascism with nudges, suggestions, and generosity rather than with complete rejection and opposition? **Unknowingness conditions our politics as well as our ethics. Rather than an ontological condition somehow compelling us to embrace the contestability and uncertainty of convictions (as if any ethical or political position could follow directly from such an account) or an ethical acknowledgement that renders what is unknown to me the same as what is unknown to the other, in politics unknowingness involves responsibility for that which one cannot but do, for the exclusions and expulsions necessarily implicated in the exercise of power. Yes, one should be willing and able to give an account of these decisions, just as one should be willing and able to condemn and oppose what should be condemned and opposed. Such will, such ability, is crucial if we are to oppose the market and religious fundamentalism threatening the world today.**